



In Search of Eldorado

Link to the Eldorado Song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VczD1olutQ8>



Hello to Family & Friends

Happy Leap Year Day!

After the USS Iowa tour the other day, when I spent so much time on the phone, one of the tours I was setting up is a boat ride to Channel Islands National Park.

The park itself doesn't transport people out to the islands, you have to book a boat ride with a certified company. For me that's Island Packers. You can't go wrong with the word Packers in it.

I have a 10:00 reservation, a catamaran boat ride of an hour and a half or so, a guided hike towards Pelican Bay and return to the mainland by 6:00 p.m.

It's difficult to get any concrete information on hiking around Santa Cruz Island, the largest of the Channel Islands, and our destination. Probably because 76% of it is a nature conservancy and only 24% is National Park. The conservancy is private and no one is allowed on their land with the exception of the guided hike to Pelican Bay. And you can't take that hike without a guide or without signing your first born away on a waiver form. Sorry Erin.

Parking was easy, right on the street. I checked in 45 minutes early as requested then went back to the RV and made sure I had enough water, Gatorade and snacks for the day. No food or garbage cans on the island. Pack out what you pack in. There is a restroom which they were just finishing up remodeling. The resident Ranger Shaun was very relieved.

Day 58
Saturday,
February 29th

Channel Islands
National Park

Weather
50's to 60's Sunny

In Search of Eldorado

By Edgar Allan Poe

Gaily bedight,
A gallant knight,
In sunshine and in shadow,
Had journeyed long,
Singing a song,
In search of Eldorado.

But he grew old—
This knight so bold—
And o'er his heart a shadow—
Fell as he found
No spot of ground
That looked like Eldorado.

And, as his strength
Failed him at length,
He met a pilgrim shadow—
'Shadow,' said he,
'Where can it be—
This land of Eldorado?'

'Over the Mountains
Of the Moon,
Down the Valley of the Shadow,
Ride, boldly ride,'
The shade replied,—
'If you seek for Eldorado!'



I had time to walk over and take this picture, but no time to visit the visitor center. They may have answered a lot of questions for me. I could have been here earlier, but I thought the VC was in Santa Barbara.



Our transportation for the day. There were a lot of empty seats.



This must be the 'G' section for oil well drilling platforms. This one is Gail, then Gilda, Gina & Grace. This is zoomed in, but we did get within a half mile or so.



Anacapa Island is the closest to the mainland.



I love it when dolphins keep pace with your boat. We clipped along at 20 mph (not knots) and they kept right alongside.



It sure is hard to catch them on film though.



Santa Cruz Island

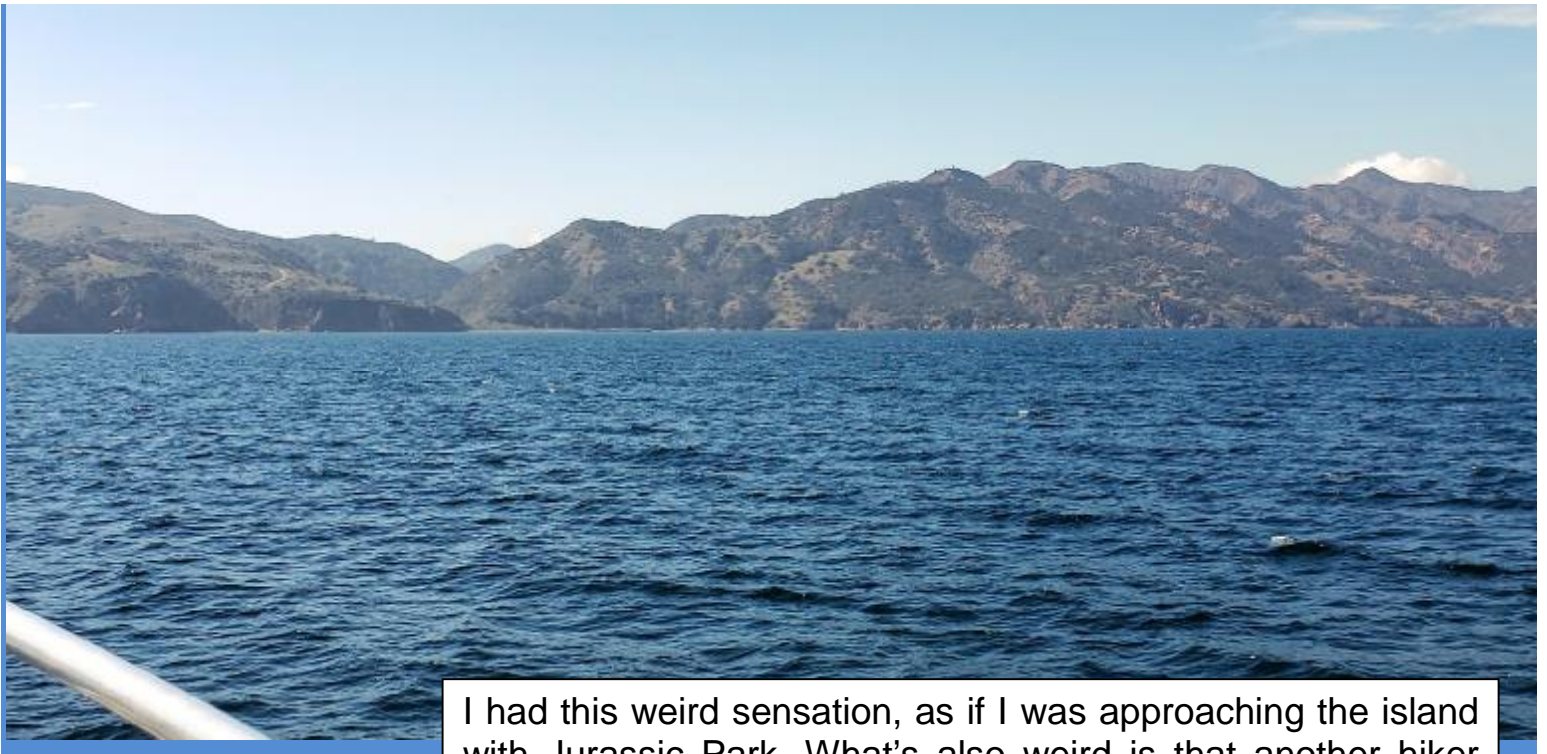


If you are not feeling well, please **DO NOT** stay in here:

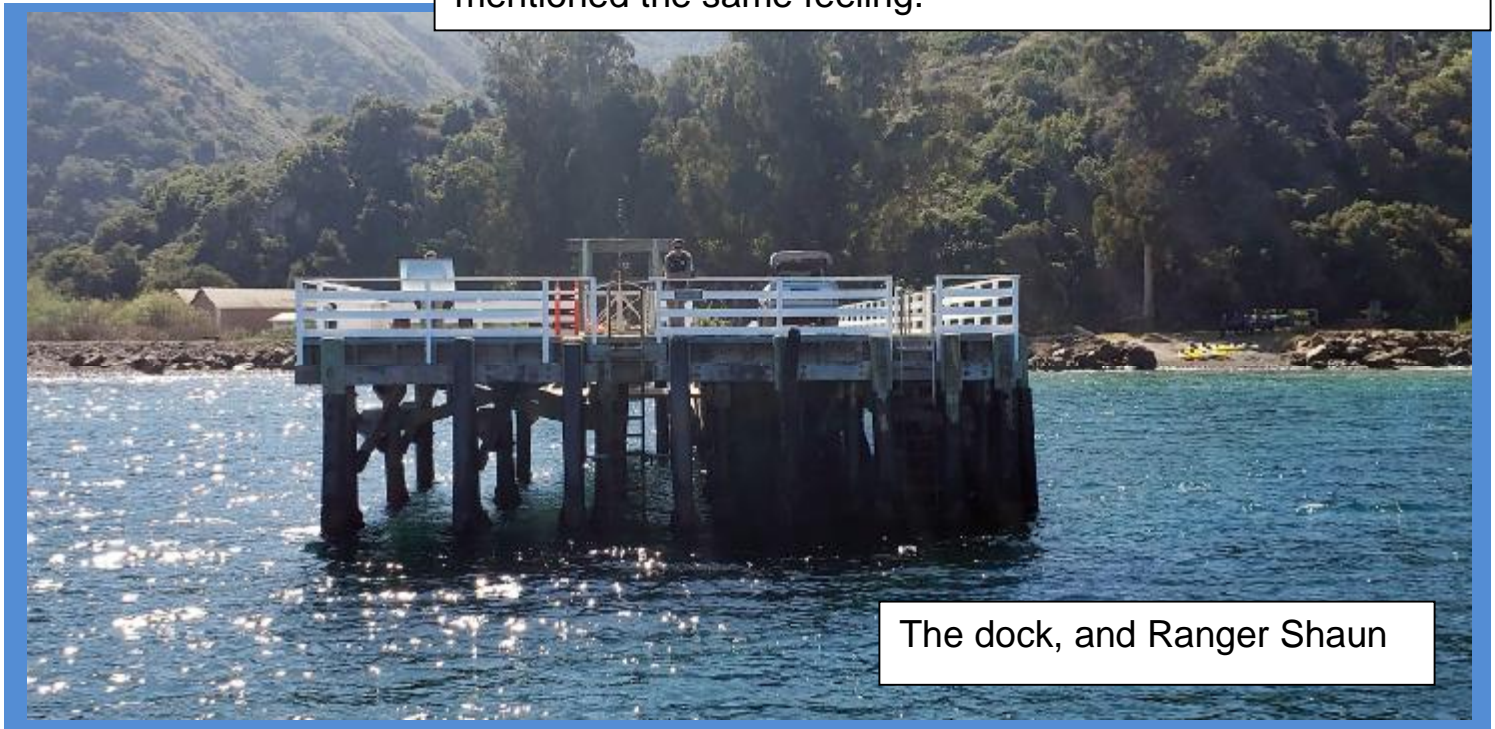
- 1) It will become your own personal torture chamber; making you feel worse.
- 2) Someone else is waiting outside to use it.
- 3) If we can't SEE you, we can't HELP you.

Thank you -
the Island Packers Crew

I used the bathroom (head) before landing and had to laugh at this sign. I didn't get seasick at all.



I had this weird sensation, as if I was approaching the island with Jurassic Park. What's also weird is that another hiker mentioned the same feeling.



The dock, and Ranger Shaun

Prisoner's Harbor? Now wait just one doggone minute here, this is not what I signed up for. Oh, from the 1830's you say? Mexican prisoners? Well then, I guess its ok.



Yes, in the 1830's Mexican prisoners were dropped off here for punishment. They were left with tools, seeds and cattle. It wasn't long before a fire burned everything they had and several built rafts and floated to the mainland. Thus, Prisoner's Harbor.



Just beautiful



The Nature Conservancy | Santa Cruz Island

Welcome to Santa Cruz Island

At 96 square miles, Santa Cruz Island is the largest and most geographically diverse of California's Channel Islands. Never connected to the mainland, Santa Cruz Island has evolved into an oasis for unique species. More than 1,000 species of plants and animals inhabit the island, 12 of them found nowhere else on Earth.

The Nature Conservancy owns 76 percent of the island; the remaining 24 percent is under National Park Service ownership. The island also lies within the boundary of Channel Islands National Park and Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary.

Together, the Conservancy, park, and sanctuary protect a wealth of species, habitats, and cultural resources. Restoration, research, monitoring, and public education are important components of island resource management.

The Nature Conservancy is committed to protecting and restoring Santa Cruz Island's unique species and habitats. With your assistance and stewardship, Santa Cruz Island will continue to recover and flourish.

Santa Cruz Island fox

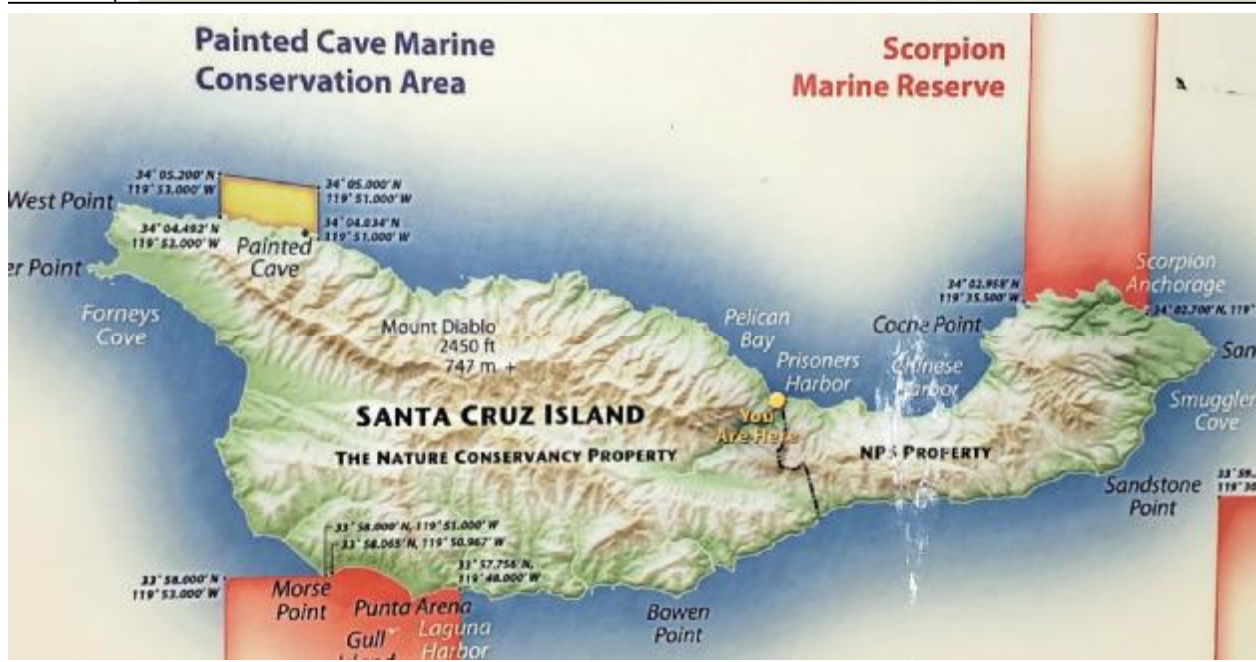
At just four pounds, the diminutive Santa Cruz Island fox, found nowhere else in the world, has been the island's top predator for thousands of years. Foxes can be harmed by diseases and parasites carried in the urine, feces, and saliva of domestic dogs.



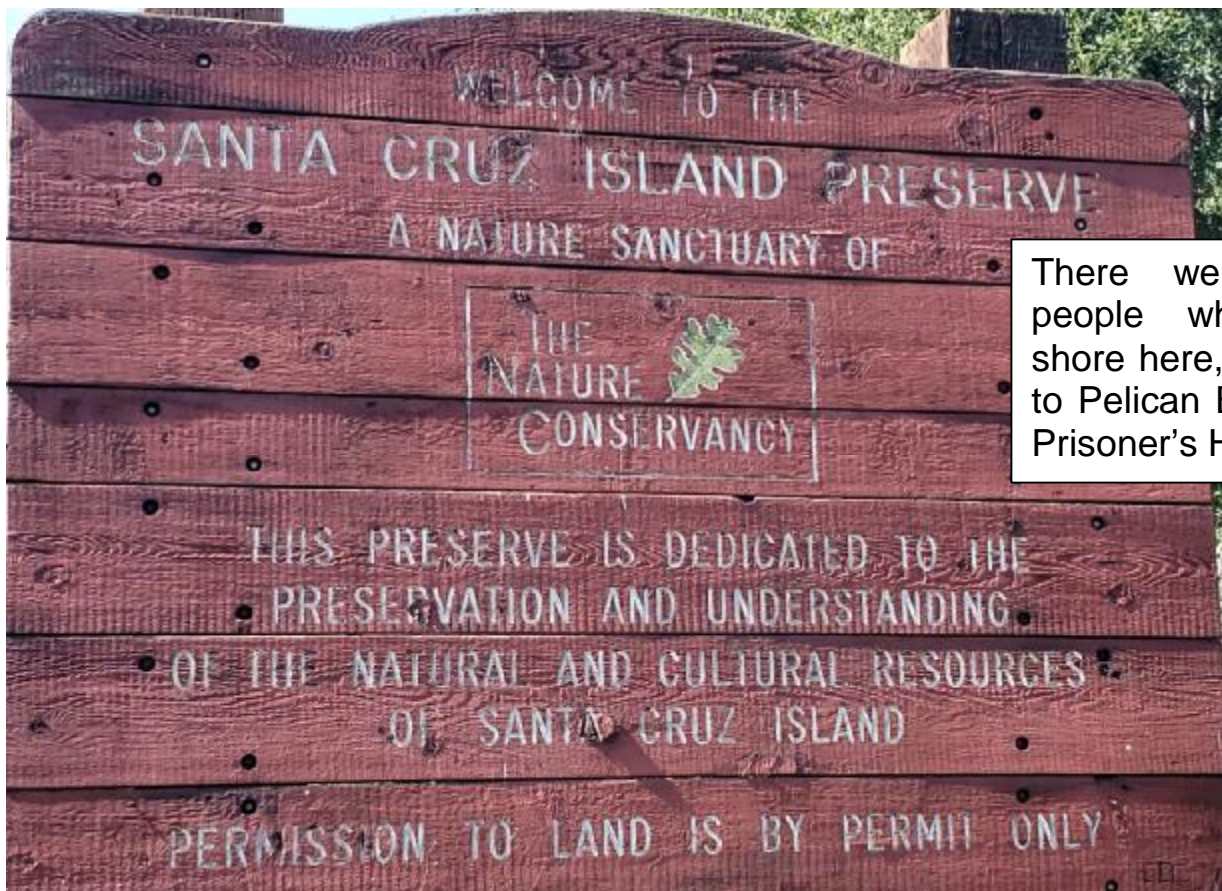
They're cute and they know it

Marine Protected Areas

The California Channel Islands shelter some of the richest marine ecosystems in the world and have been set aside as both a National Park and a National Marine Sanctuary. A network of 13 Marine Protected Areas covering 318 square miles (240 square nautical miles) have been established by the State of California and the federal government to provide a refuge for sea life.



These are Island Scrub Jays, found only on Santa Cruz Island and nowhere else in the world. There are several endemic (native and restricted to a certain place. Thanks Brittney) species here because the islands were never part of the mainland. They were formed by a separate fault and movement of plate tectonics. All animals and plants on the island were either brought here or blown here by the wind.



There were about twenty people who climbed onto shore here, the rest stayed or to Pelican Bay. They'll hike to Prisoner's Harbor from there.



They call this a strenuous hike (maybe for about 100 yards of the five miles, maybe). Brittany is a marine Biologist and our guide for the hike. Of the twenty, only four of us are following her. A couple wants to turn back about half way because they catch the 3:30 boat. I plan on hiking for an hour then turn back so I can explore some on the National Park side.

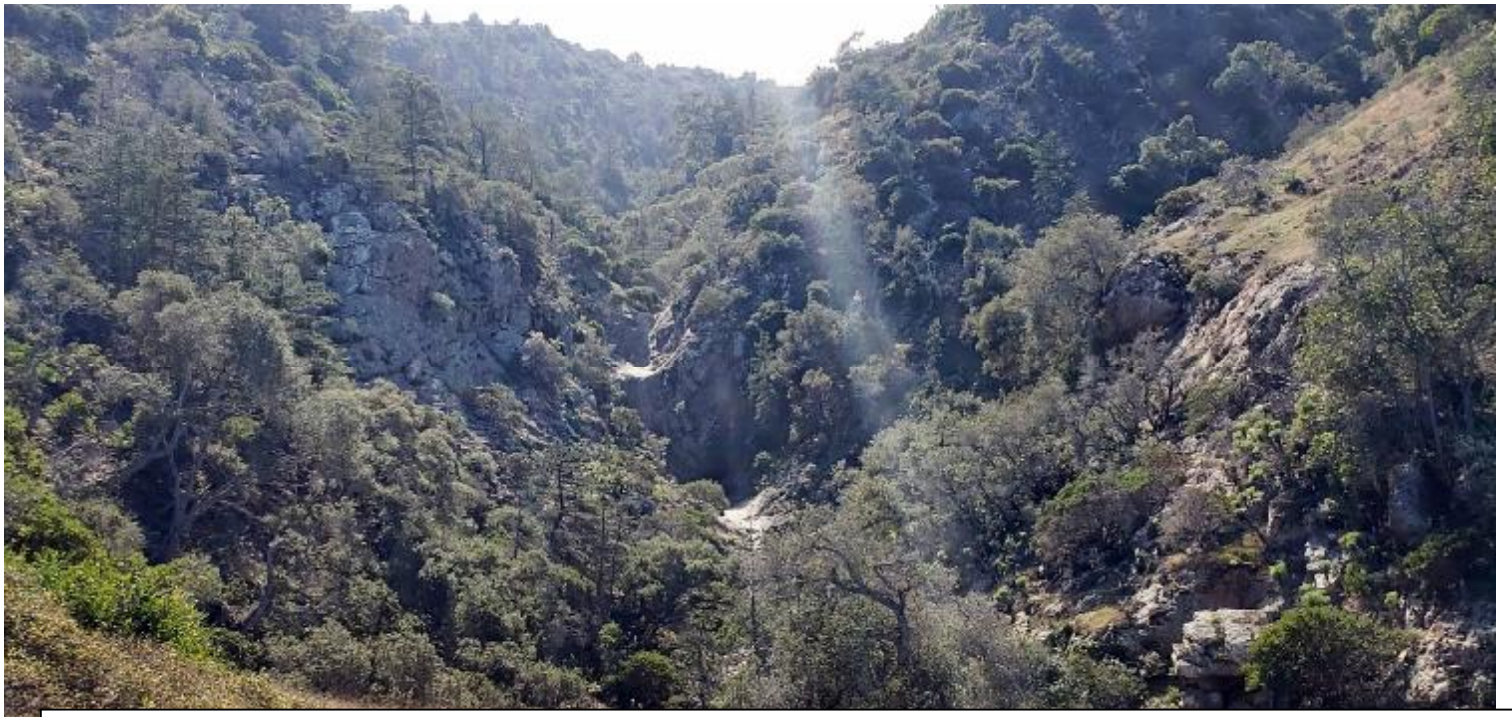


This is the view up the canyon. It was mostly wetlands originally until ranchers filled it in. Since the 80's the NPS has been trying to restore it.



Above is the view north from Harvey's Point (I think that's the name) and below is the view east. You can see Navy Road – more on that later.





It was with this view of Pelican Bay that I ate my lunch while Brittany and Emily continued on. On my hike back I chased several lizards off the path, but this one stayed put.



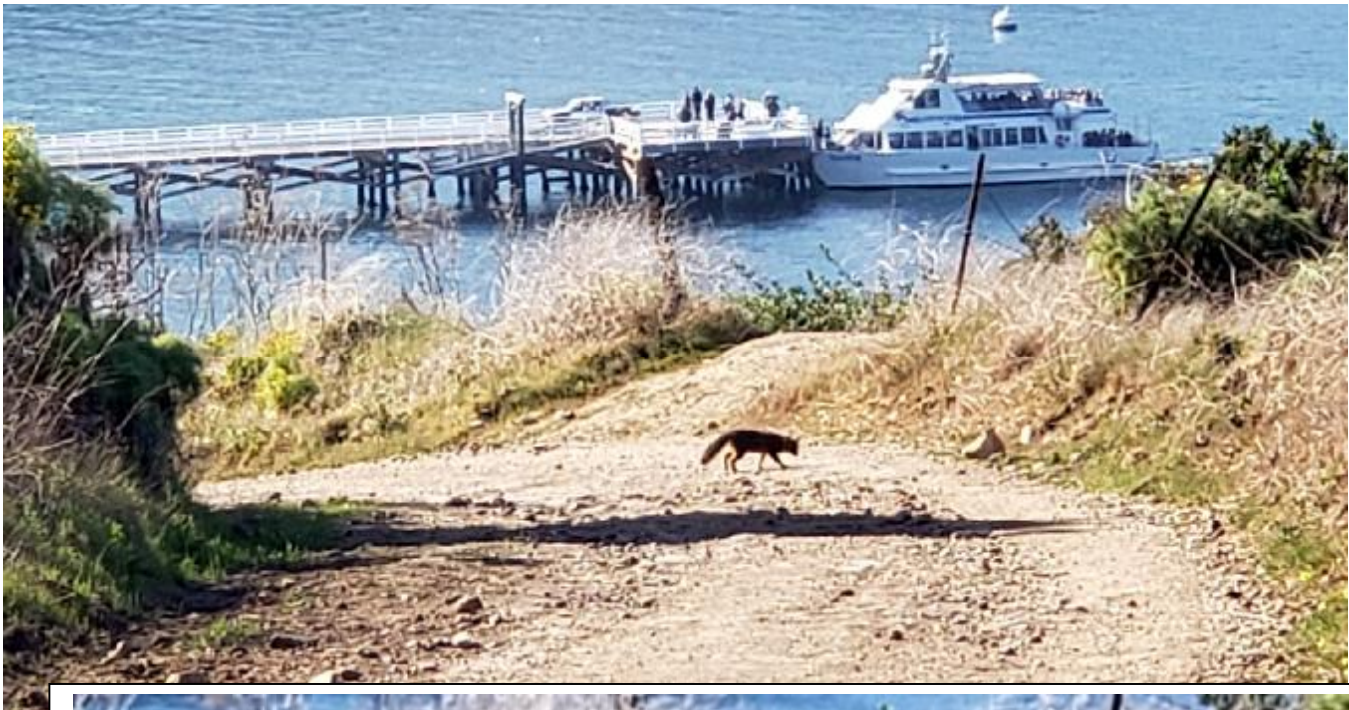
Once back at Prisoner's Harbor I set out for the 2.5 mile (one-way) trek to the Southside Overlook. This is not a trail but the Navy Road which climbs up, and up, and up, and up. This was much more strenuous than the other hike. I made it about 1.5 miles, saw the road curving still higher on the mountainside ahead and turned around.





Can you see him? I followed him down the road for several hundred yards. Never knowing when he was going to turn into the undergrowth I kept walking and taking pictures. I deleted most of them.





From his position above he turned around and crossed the road to the left and disappeared into the grass. When I arrived at the turn I thought, there's no place for him to climb up here. Then I noticed him munching away. He must have caught a mouse or something. I'm only about fifteen feet away at this point and he never moved from his meal. I watched for awhile, pointed him out to another hiker on his way up then walked away while he was still there. Once again, this is the only place in the world to see a Santa Cruz Island Fox. Special



All aboard and heading for home.



No whale sightings. It was a little rougher water on the way back since the wind had picked up, but we arrived safely.

I drove to a Ralph's for some food, then sat in the lot writing yesterday's newsletter and trying to find something to do tomorrow. I have three days to fill before the girls arrive.

I drove to Canoga Park and found a cul de sac in an industrial area. Oddly enough, when I left in the morning only two blocks away were parked several motorhomes and several tents.

Until next time.....